

OZARK NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAYS

Taped Interview

of

Walter Carr

by

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Park Ranger

Ozark National Scenic Riverways

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INTERVIEWEE: Walter Carr, Round Spring, Missouri  
INTERVIEWER: Warren Snyder, OZAR  
SUBJECT: Round Spring Store and Round Spring Area  
DATE: 28 July 1978  
TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

WS: Mr. Carr, when and where were you born?

WC: I was born in Ellington, Missouri, April 23, 1909 to Ira A. Carr and Susan E. Carr.

WS: Where were your parents from originally?

WC: My parents were both born, or my father was born in Ohio, and my mother was born here in Shannon County, Missouri. My grandparents on my father's side immigrated here to Missouri from Ohio in the 1860's about 1865. My mother's parents came from Sainte Genevieve, Missouri, and they had originally came from Tennessee to Sainte Genevieve. My parents moved from Ellington to Eminence when I was two years old and my father run the Current Wave newspaper in Eminence for a number of years after moving to Eminence. From Eminence we moved to West Eminence when West Eminence was booming of the lumber industry, and my father worked there several years up until about 1917, and then he went into the timber business on his own. He ran a tie job on the Current River near the mouth of Sutton's Creek and later he bought a sawmill and sawmilled on what's known as Lower Big Creek, and coming back to near Eminence, he moved on my grandfather's place, Grandfather Counts, on my mother's side, moved on his farm after my Grandfather Counts had passed away and Grandmother Counts also, and was administrator of the estate of that family, the Counts family, and we lived on that farm until 1920. In the

fall of 1920 he bought 480 acres of land near Round Springs and also went in the sawmill business and sawmilled there up until 1925 and in the winter of 1924 and the spring of 1925 he built the old original store building at Round Springs down on the old county road. That's the building that the government now owns here at Round Springs and the building that you have the picture of that was taken later. In 1930 the Spring Valley bridge was built and the highway was finished from the Spring Valley south and the folks that my father had sold the store to in 1928 moved this old original store building up on Highway 19 where this picture that you have, the location of where that picture was made, and when he sold the store in 1928, he sold to some people by the name of MacDonald from near Joplin, Missouri, and there the people that had the store moved from the old county road up onto the highway. They sold the old store building, the building set on the land owned by Robert Shuck and they only had a lease for the place for the store building there, the MacDonald's did, and they sold the store then to Robert Shuck, and I was on the farm up here near Round Springs two and a half miles from Round Springs, the old original land that my father had bought back in 1920, and I was married in the year of 1930, the year that the Spring Valley bridge was built, to Myrtle Eudy, July 3, 1930, and we lived on the farm near my father until that fall and we left and went to Wyoming, and we spent the winter of 1930 and 1931 in Wyoming, returning back to the farm up here in the spring of 1931, moving back into the same house that we had left. I farmed there until 1934 when we had the bad drought, and I left that fall and went up in Illinois and worked at the Swift Packing Company that winter and that was the year that the government bought all the cattle. Prices were so low and people had no feed and couldn't get rid of them and the government

bought these cattle and had them processed and I worked there at Swift's Packing Company that winter while this cattle processing was going on and that's when the government canned a lot of the food that was handed out on relief during the Depression there, and I worked there when Swift Packing Company killed the biggest day's run of cattle that was ever run through Swift Packing Company in East St. Louis, Illinois. The foreman came in one morning and told us that we had to kill more cattle, that every pen in the stockyard, that every alley was full, there was 39 train carloads of cattle a setting on the track that couldn't be unloaded and trucks were lined up from the packing house back to the free bridge which was over a mile. It couldn't get in to unload. He said we would have to speed up the line and kill more cattle. He did speed up the line and we killed 233 cattle an hour for the first five hours and in the 8-hour shifts we killed over 1600 cattle. That was my experience in the Swift Packing Company in the winter of 1934. I came back to the farm and farmed in 1935, and had a fair crop year, and in 1936 I farmed again and then we had another drought another year, didn't raise anything, and I went back to Illinois and worked until the fall of 1937, and I worked at the American Car and Foundry Company in Madison, Illinois, and we built a thousand coal cars and that was the last cars that was ever built at the American Car and Foundry Company in Madison, Illinois. When that job was completed, I came back to the farm, original farm, near Round Spring and couldn't find any work whatever. The Depression was still going on in full and there was a fellow by the name of Lewis had the original old store building that my father had built that I spoke of before at Round Springs and he started trying to sell me that store, and I had thirty-five dollars and I kept studying about it and I went to the landowner which was still Robert Shuck and asked his advice about renting



the building and so forth and he said, he told me, he said, well, suit yourself. I'll tell you one thing, if you can't pay the rent, I'll let you work it out and the rent on the building was fifteen dollars per month, and I only had thirty-five dollars. I went to the Winona Savings Bank and borrowed four-hundred and fifty dollars and bought the store and took over January 25, 1938, and on February 6 of that year my father was hit by a car on the Spring Valley bridge and died on February 10, and my mother came to live with me just a short time later and lived with me 10 years before she passed away. I was there until 1941 and I got the job of superintendent of Round Springs State Park and I moved my stock of groceries into the building that now stands where Douglas Keeling has his concession, and I was there until the spring of 1944, I believe it was, and the administration changed and I lost that job. I got that appointment under Governor Donnell and when the administration changed, I lost that job politically and I had purchased a 10-acre piece of land at the mouth of Sinking, near the Sinking Creek Bridge and I moved. I built a cabin up there and moved up there because I was operated on that spring and wasn't able to work during that summer. That winter I went to Salem and worked with a brother-in-law of mine, Walter Prugh, and then I came back, that was the winter of 1945, and I came back and went back in business at the location where Gary Smith is now in the fall of 1946, and continued in business there until the fourth day of March, 1971, when I retired.

MS: I want to go back just a bit, see if you can recall the days in Ellington. What was your father's occupation in Ellington at that time?

MC: He was running the newspaper in Ellington.

MS: I see. He ran a newspaper there also.

MC: Yes. My mother run a hotel there.

WS: Did you attend school in Ellington at that time?

WC: No, I was only two years old when we came from Ellington to Eminence. I went my first, second, third and fourth years of school at Eminence.

WS: You were in second, third and fourth grade in Eminence?

WC: Yes.

WS: What school did you attend in Eminence?

WC: Well, the old original schoolhouse that still stands up on top of the hill up there.

WS: I see. From there you moved to West Eminence.

WC: I was still attending the same school. I went one year to the same school while we were at West Eminence.

WS: And your father did run the newspaper in Eminence.

WC: Yes.

WS: For two years then. Getting to the Round Spring area, your father was in the timber business for awhile. Did you attend any schools in this area, the Round Spring area?

WC: Yes, I attended, I finished the eighth grade in the Forest Glen School on Spring Valley, and that was the extent of my education.

WS: Do you recall any of your teachers that may have stuck in your mind that really helped you?

WC: Yes. One of my sisters taught there one term and a lady by the name of Oma Seeber taught the next term and then Paralee Cox taught the rest of years when I finished up the eighth grade.

WS: The timber business at that time was pretty prosperous.

WC: At the time we moved here in the spring of 1920 and 1920, winter of 1920 and the spring of 1921, started sawmilling. There was a big mill also running on the bank of Current River just below the mouth of the

spring branch where a campground now exists, where the government campground exists. There was a mill there. A man ran it by the name of Freed. There was also a mill running in what's known as Capp's Hollow, which is a mile below Round Springs on the east side of the river, and B. Johnson Tie Company was running that mill there at that same time. Also a mile above Round Springs on the west side of the river in what's known as Benton Hollow there's quite a big mill running by a man by the name of Steward. There was lots of timber work going on during those years of 1920 up to 1925.

WS: You said in about 1925 that you helped your father build the Round Springs store?

WC: That's correct. We sawed the lumber and dried it in a kiln and dressed it on a planer, every board that's in that building.

WS: What type of wood did you use?

WC: Pine.

WS: Now, I want to get this location straight in my mind. Originally it was located on the old county road in Spring Valley?

WC: That's right. Just below, just east of where the parking lot now is for people to enter the cave. It was, you might say, about a hundred yards due north of where the Round Springs Lodge stood later.

WS: What type of merchandise was sold in the store at that time?

WC: Well, just the general line of merchandise, and when we first came there, there was very little traffic on the road and for a few months we sold gasoline out of barrels. We measured it out of barrels in two and three gallon containers and poured it in the automobiles, mostly Model T's, and gasoline at that time as I remember was seventeen and eighteen cents a gallon. Later we got one of the old type glass bowl pumps installed



by Standard Oil Company from Winona, where we'd been buying our gas in barrels and that was the first gasoline pump that was ever at Round Springs, and that was about, must have been about the spring of 1926, I believe, and we did that, and then that was quite an improvement over draining it out of a barrel and measuring it in a measure and pouring it in an automobile. We had a general line of groceries and we also brought some produce, bought chickens and eggs and from the farmers around we had a general line of groceries and of course we handled gloves and socks and women's hose and a few dry goods like that.

WS: Could you describe the interior of the store as to how the counters were set up?

WC: Well, we had two counters, a counter on each side, long counters that we built ourselves, two long counters on each side and shelves on each wall. I can't remember the exact dimensions of that building. It's still down there, could be measured. I don't remember the dimensions of the building, but we had living quarters, we had a room on each side, east end of the building rather, where we had our kitchen and dining room and then on the south side of the building we had a room the full length of the building which made rooms actually, two bedrooms, and we had our living quarters right there with the store, in connection with it. There was only my mother and father and myself because I'm the youngest child in the family and there was only the three of us.

WS: Where did most of your customers come from?

WC: At that time there was so many more people living in this area that it is hard for a person now to imagine how many people that lived in the area of Round Spring at that time, on little farms that the government has now taken and also little farms that were abandoned later and then



the people also they just had houses or shacks, temporary shacks where they worked in the timber and the residents at that time in I'll say a three-mile radius of Round Spring, I would estimate, is, well, it's hard to make an estimation. There's such few people living near Round Spring now, but I would say there was a hundred or more families lived in a three-mile radius of Round Springs.

WS: Do you recall where the post office was located in Round Springs?

WC: Yes, I'm trying to think. Charlie Broadfoot secured the first post office at Round Spring, and he's the man that build the building where I was and been for twenty-four years and where Gary Smith now operates. He built that in the year of 1930, but before that he had a grocery store in the building where Doug Keeling now has his concession, and a fellow by the name of Blake was park superintendent at that time, and the state decided to, I don't know exactly what caused the decision for him to build the store over across the river at the north end of the bridge, but he built that in the spring of 1930 and moved from this building on that state park over into the building at the north end of the Current River bridge, and that building I recall, it had the store building just as it is now and the living quarters and all and I recall him telling me what that building cost. It cost him twelve-hundred and eighty dollars to build that new building.

WS: Do you recall how much it cost to build the Round Springs store?

WC: No, I don't, because see that was....you mean the original store that we built in 1935? Well, now, I wouldn't have any way of knowing because all we had to buy was our doors, windows and roofing because we had all the materials, see, all the lumber, and I doubt if what we had to buy like nails and doors, hinges, windows and so forth, roofing,

I would say, two hundred dollars or less.

WS: How the store was relocated by the people who bought the store from your father? Do you recall when that was relocated?

WC: It was relocated in the fall of 1930. When they finished the Spring Valley bridge and the road leading south from the Spring Valley bridge that company had some bulldozers and this fellow MacDonald hired them to put skids under this building and skid it up on the highway and set it up with those bulldozers, so it was pretty well constructed to stand to be moved in that manner the distance that it was moved there.

WS: It would have to be pretty sturdy. How about churches in the area? Were there any churches in the area?

WC: The first church at Round Springs, when the Spring Valley bridge was built, the superintendent of the bridge work built a house between the north end of the Spring Valley bridge and the entrance, the original entrance into the park where Keeling now has a concession on the west side of the road, just on the hillside, and when the bridge was completed and he got ready to leave, this....as I said a while ago, this fellow Blake was park superintendent at that time and they were trying to get a little church started and he gave that building to the community for a church and it stood on state park property so Blake, the superintendent, got permission from the State Park Board to use that building as a church, and that was the first church which was established at Round Springs, and I can't recall just how many years that we used that for a church building, but we used it, oh, approximately, I'd say 10 years, must have been, close to ten years. Before the church was....

WS: Mr. Carr, you mentioned that you had to build a church in the Round Spring area, I think it was around 1938 or 1939, you mentioned that.

WC: Yes, it was in 1939. The ladies formed a club and they raised some money by making quilts and various things and then the balance of it was donations from the people just in the neighborhood to buy the lumber and roofing and so on except what money that this club had managed to put on which wasn't a whole lot and the labor was all donated. There wasn't any labor paid for whatever. I didn't do much work on the building because I was busy at the store, but I donated some money and then helped some when we were finishing up on the inside after the structure was up. I helped stain the window and door facings and the trim on the inside and did some work, but on the actual construction, I didn't help very much, maybe a couple or three days, I don't remember, I don't recall how much, but not a whole lot of work on the construction.

WS: Where was this church located?

WC: The church we're speaking of now?

WS: Yes.

WC: Well, it was located on the old county road, oh, it would have been approximately half a mile from the Round Springs proper on the old Spring Valley county road.

WS: Just below the cave entrance then?

WC: Above, up the valley from the canyon.

WS: I think they refer to it as the old Patterson tract when the Pattersons owned it, I think Park Service owns it now.

WC: The Pattersons are the ones that, or Mrs. Patterson after Mr. Patterson died, sold it to the Park Service. It had various owners before that.

WS: You also mentioned that they use it for a voting precinct or station?



WC: Yes, for several years. The best I recall it was used as a voting place from the time it was built until the precinct was discontinued, but I can't give you the date on when that was, but it was Jasper No. 3 and talking about the population around Round Spring during those years, we had almost two-hundred votes cast at that precinct there at Jasper No. 3 in some of the elections along during that time; I worked in several elections, several times there.

WS: If I can for just a few minutes, I'd like to ask you some questions about the Round Spring cave and the lodge and that area. Do you recall when the cave was first opened up, for visitation?

WC: I can't give you an exact date on that. I just can't remember what year, but there was a fellow by the name of Hauser, Ed Hauser, acquired that first original 160 acres of land that adjoined Round Springs State Park property on the west and I think there was a couple of other men in with him on this, but Hauser is the only man I ever got acquainted with. He made a quite a lot of trips down here and I eventually got acquainted with him when he was getting this cave opened up and started it operating, and he brought a man from Cuba with him that took care of the cave for it seems to be about four years and I can't recall this man's name. He was some other nationality....then when he left, the next caretaker of the cave was named Grizzle, and he was there for many years and he built the house, one of the old buildings that you asked me about over there, not the square house that still stands, but the old ramshackle house that fell down just below the square house that you asked me about, and he took care of the cave for, oh, several years. Soon after the cave was opened up, Round Springs Lodge was built and the first lady that run the Lodge name was Mrs. Faye, F-A-Y-E, and she

ran that several years and she sold out. Now she purchased what they called Seven Acres that laid between the county road and the Spring Valley Creek and ran up into the cave entrance in that tract where the parking lot for the cavern now is located, and she also built four cabins between the Lodge and the highway that she rented for overnight cabins. She sold out to a lady from Chicago by the name of Bywell. Mrs. Bywell only run it two years and she sold it to a couple and I won't be positive about this name, they were only there a short time, but as I recall their name was Lawson, but they were only there a short time and left, and that's when the.....

WS: Is there a Richeson?

WC: Mrs. Faye sold to Richeson and they had one daughter, Betty. Betty married a boy, a native boy here at Round Springs, by the name of Ramsey and soon after they was married he was inducted in the army, inducted into the army, and while he was away, she lived with her dad and mother for some time and then later went to St. Louis and then went to work and worked until he came back out of the army. When he came back out of the army, there had been built the house across the road, the building that stands now, across the road from where the old Lodge stood, and they lived in it a short time and then built the square-topped house that we've talked about over in the old field near the cave, but they only live in it a short time and left and went to Kansas and never did live back here anymore. They live in Colorado now, and the Richesons sold out to a real estate man and I don't know his name, I can't remember, and he in turn bought the Seven Acres plus the cave tract, but we get a little ahead of our story, but back a few years before this, the original cave tract was 160 acres and when they completely got the cave

opened up, both prongs, it's a forked cave resembling a Y, they found that the left-hand prong cavern ran back under other property so they had to buy an original, another eighty acres to add to the original 160 from Pioneer Cooperage Company because this left-hand or west prong of the cave ran back under the Pioneer Cooperage Company property. The Richesons sold to this real estate man and he acquired all of this type of land including this seven acres where the Lodge stood. In turn he sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Patterson from Kansas who kept it up until Mr. Patterson passed away and then Mrs. Patterson sold to the government.

WS: Did the Richesons own the Lodge and the cave then, both?

WC: No. They only owned the...yes, they did, too. They owned the entire tract, the Richesons did.

WS: Can I ask you a few questions about the State Park? You mentioned you were superintendent for awhile, and wasn't some relation of yours that was the first superintendent of Round Springs State Park?

WC: Yes, the Park was acquired in November of 1934, the state bought the seventy-five acres, the original Round Springs State Park tract of land. I can't tell you, I can't remember who they purchased it from, but they appointed my uncle, Grant L. Carr, as superintendent of the Park. He was the first superintendent. He was there as superintendent when the Park was dedicated in November or September 2, 1925. As I recall, he went there the first of the year of 1925. He was there through 1925, 1926 and 1927, and the man Blake that I mentioned before was the next superintendent after Carr. The next Park superintendent who took over, I believe in the spring of 1933, was John Banks and he was superintendent up until the time that I'd taken over in 1941. Then when I left the



the Park he came back and was superintendent again and he passed away during the time that he was superintendent this last time and his son, Manuel Banks, was appointed superintendent. Now these dates I can't give you the exact dates of these changes from there on up, but anyway, Banks was there two or three years and then Earl Chilton was appointed Park superintendent. And Earl Chilton passed away during his term as Park superintendent at Round Springs. He died with a heart attack in Bob's Restaurant in Eminence. Then they brought in another superintendent...whose name was Charles Wyatt, W-Y-A-T-T. He was there a short time and they brought in another superintendent from the north part of Shannon County by the name of Kerney Sutton. He wasn't there too long until he'd taken another job of work at the mines and they brought in a man by the name of Tom Groff who I understand was fired off the job as superintendent of the Park and they brought in James Hallcroft and Hallcroft was transferred to another State park up in northern Missouri and they brought in Jerry Whittle and he was superintendent at the time the government took over the Park.

MS: Mr. Carr, after you were superintendent at Round Spring, you mentioned you went back into business again. What type of business was this?

MC: I went back in the grocery business at the location where Gary Smith now is. And I started a canoe rental. I had the first canoe rental that there was on the Current River.

Mrs.C: We went back in business there in December, 1946.

END OF INTERVIEW